

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 AID-05 IGA-02 IO-13 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8799

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, TH
SUBJ: PRISON CONDITIONS OF "THAMMASAT 18"

REF: BANGKOK 1927

1. THAI LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER, MATICHON (PEOPLE'S RESOLUTION),
CARRIED REPORT, JAN. 21, ALLEGING THAT PRISON CONDITIONS FOR
"THAMMASAT 18" WERE IMPROVED "SOME DAYS" PRIOR TO ASSISTANT
SECRETARY DERIAN'S VISIT IN ORDER "TO WELCOME THE U.S. OFFICIAL."
CITING SOURCES AT THE CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT, THE ARTICLE SAYS
"MORE ELECTRIC LIGHTS WERE INSTALLED AND DESKS WERE PROVIDED
FOR THE PRISONERS' USE AT NIGHT".

2. WHETHER INTENTIONAL OR NOT, THE NEWS ACCOUNT GIVES THE MIS-
LEADING IMPRESSION THAT THE RTG MADE SOME LAST MINUTE COMSETIC
IMPROVEMENTS IN ORDER TO IMPRESS MS. DERIAN. BOTH CORRECTIONS
DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS AND THE DETAINEES THEMSELVES HAVE CONFIRMED
THAT CONDITIONS AT BANGKWANG PRISON, AS VIEWED BY MS. DERIAN
ON JAN. 18, WERE MUCH AS THEY HAD BEEN FOR SEVERAL MONTHS.

3. THERE IS LITTLE QUESTION THAT CONDITIONS FOR THE "THAMMASAT18"
HAVE IMPROVED SINCE THEY WERE FIRST ARRESTED, ALONG WITH MORE
THAN 3,000 OTHERS, IN OCTOBER, 1976. IN MOST RESPECTS THE
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DEFENDANTS ARE ACCORDED BETTER TREATMENT (E.G., MORE PRIVACY
AND MORE LIBERAL VISITATION PRIVILEGES) THAN ARE ORDINARY THAI
PRISONERS. WE BELIEVE THESE IMPROVED CONDITIONS ARE, IN PART,
ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE CONTINUING EXPRESSIONS OF INTERNATIONAL
CONCERN AND NOT SIMPLY A RESULT OF HURRIED ATTEMPTS TO IMPRESS
MS. DERIAN DURING HER RECENT VISIT.

4. MATICHON RECENTLY BEGAN PUBLICATION, WITH THE SAME OWNERS
AND MOSTLY SAME STAFF OF PRACHACHAT (DEMOCRACY), A LEFTIST AND
FREQUENTLY ANTI-AMERICAN NEWSPAPER SUPPRESSED AFTER THE COUP OF
OCTOBER, 1976. L LE TAKEN IN MATICHON ARTICLE REFERRED TO IN
PARA ONE IS INTERESTING, AS IT CUTS TWO WAYS: IT IS MILDLY
CRITICAL OF THE DETENTION OF THE STUDENTS AND IT ALSO MANAGES TO
SUGGEST THAT THE THAI GOVERNMENT IS SUBSERVIENT TO THE U.S.
WHITEHOUSE

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